

Prisoners at 4 Institutions Locked Up

By DEL LANE
Tribune Staff Writer

The unprecedented general lockup of prisoners in California's four highest-security prisons won't end until each prison develops a plan to control violence and that plan is personally approved by Raymond Procunier, state corrections director, prison authorities said Saturday.

The lockups began at midnight Friday at Procunier's orders as a result of a rising wave of prison violence against inmates and guards that culminated last week in the execution-style slaying of a popular guard at Deuel Vocational Institute near Tracy.

In the investigation of that stabbing, authorities said, they turned up evidence that it was part of a plot by prison revolutionaries to assassinate guards at the four prisons involved—San Quentin, Folsom, Soledad and Deuel.

"There's a pretty well repeated report from inmates in different institutions that there's a group known as the 'Black Guerrilla Family' who are people who label themselves as successors and brothers to George Jackson," said Philip Guthrie, a spokesman for Procunier.

Guthrie said there have been 147 prison stabbings, resulting in 17 deaths, in the state prison system so far this year, most of them in the four prisons under the lockup order.

At San Quentin, there have been 51 assaults and seven

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Kill Prison Guards

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deaths so far this year, all of them attacks on other inmates, according to Reid Bristow, duty officer there. Two of the assaults, and one of the slayings, have taken place since Thanksgiving, he said.

Bristow said San Quentin Warden Louis S. Nelson has ordered his staff to devise the safety plan called for by Procunier by the middle of this week. He indicated there was some concern over the "potentially explosive" effects of maintaining the inmates under the general lockup for an extended period.

"I expect that maintenance facilities, welding shops, machine shops and other operations with a weapons-making potential will be moved outside the walls or at least put under much tighter surveillance" under the new plan, Bristow said.

"We won't be able to end this lockup until we can assure reasonable safety for the inmates and staff. We're going to have to take a whole new look at the entire question of prison industry and other programs," he said.

During the lockup, Bristow said, minimum-security prisoners are allowed out of their cells to man the essential functions and emergency services of the prison, and there has been no reduction in visiting privileges. All other inmates are locked in their cells all day, except for two meal periods when they are taken in small groups under increased security to the dining halls.

Two inmates at Deuel, Eugene R. Allen, 20, and Ernest Graham, 22, are being questioned in the stabbing death of guard Jerry R. Sanders.

As part of the lockup that began this weekend, authorities are conducting a cell-by-cell weapons search. So far, a cache of seven prison-made knives was found at Folsom, plus several other weapons hidden on prison grounds.

Bristow said a number of knives have been turned up at San Quentin, but he wasn't sure how many or of what type.

The four institutions involved in the lockup are the state's only medium-to-maxi-

mum security facilities. "We get the more violence-prone inmates," Bristow said.

Some 8,900 inmates, or about 40 per cent of the 22,000 men in the state prison system, are affected by the lockup. About 3,000 of them, plus some 400 guards, are at San Quentin.

The lockup order means the suspension of all regular training, counseling and recreational programs. Bristow said that any of those programs that can't be justified on a security basis face being eliminated.

Guthrie, Procunier's spokesman, put it: "The first priority, even above good feeding and programs and all, is going to have to be staff and inmate safety."

He said that when the lockup is lifted, there will probably be new restrictions such as cuts in schooling programs, reduction in recreation activities for large groups of inmates and more "gun coverage" in prison walkways.

Bristow said the usual procedure in prison violence is to order a lockup for the one facility involved. (In one such action at San Quentin, he said, guards filled a 2½-ton truck with contraband weapons they found.)

Procunier's unprecedented four-prison lockup could be an indication of the sweeping nature of the security changes to be expected.

6 suspects arrested in bank robbery

JUN 15 1970

Berkeley—Six armed men robbed a Berkeley bank of about \$5,600 yesterday and fled after forcing employees and customers to lie on the floor.

A silent alarm tipped police to the lightning three-minute robbery, and shortly afterward six suspects were taken into custody—including three who fled into an apartment building. They were talked out one by one while a squad of police trained their guns on the doors. The first to emerge carried a three-year-old child who was later taken to a foster home.

Sources close to the investigation said at least two of the six suspects are believed to be members of the Black Guerrilla Family, a prison gang founded by George Jackson before he was slain in a San Quentin prison shootout in 1971. The six are being investigated in connection with a series of previous felonies including earlier bank robberies, the sources said.

The robbery occurred at a south Berkeley branch of a Wells Fargo bank shortly after 1 p.m. Police said four men entered the bank at 3290 Adeline St. and drew their guns, ordering customers and employees to lie on the floor. Two men remained outside.

Three of the gunmen leaped over the counter and rifled two tellers' cash drawers.

Witnesses saw a fifth man standing outside

the door, apparently intent on preventing anyone from entering or leaving the bank.

Within three minutes, the robbers had fled in two cars parked outside—but not before a teller had pushed the silent alarm that alerted police.

Arriving officers spotted two cars fleeing the scene and chased them. The occupants abandoned the cars near King and Prince streets and split up.

Pursuing officers arrested 26-year-old Keith Lott of Berkeley, who they said was found under a nearby parked car. A 27-year-old Albany man, Edward G. Brooks, and 30-year-old Charles Coleman of Berkeley were arrested minutes later in nearby backyards.

Police said three other suspects fled into the apartment house at 1643 Prince St. Officers cordoned off a two-block area and surrounded the building as negotiators talked to the suspects by telephone. After two hours, the suspects agreed to come out.

Arrested at the Prince Street address were 28-year-old Roy Grant of Oakland and 27-year-old Edward A. Moten and 31-year-old William Lofton, both from San Francisco.

All six suspects are being held for investigation of armed robbery with bail set at \$75,000 each.

Some of the stolen money was recovered along with one handgun.

Police say ex-convicts planned kidnappings, Folsom break-out

DEC 9 1979

By Martin Halstuk
and Lance Williams
Tribune Staff Writers

A seemingly routine marijuana arrest on a San Francisco streetcorner may have averted a prison gang's plot to kidnap diplomats from foreign consulates as part of a bold escape attempt at Folsom Prison.

The Tribune has learned from court records and other sources that evidence seized during the arrest in June of Edward Glenn Brooks led to an investigation of a planned prison breakout by the Black Guerrilla Family.

Brooks, an ex-convict and suspected BGF member, later was charged with the shooting of

Berkeley attorney Fay Stender and with a Berkeley bank robbery.

Documents and photographs that police said were found in a satchel carried by Brooks at the time of his San Francisco arrest June 8 were the subject of testimony in a recent preliminary hearing in the bank robbery case.

The escape plan authorities investigated involved kidnapping officials from the Swiss, West German, Japanese and Swedish consulates in San Francisco and holding them hostage to win the freedom of prison inmates.

A member of the Eastbay's prominent Kaiser family was also a potential kidnap target, one of the documents indicated.

Although the breakout plans were characterized as being in "preliminary stages," San Francisco police took the matter seriously enough to inform the diplomats of the matter, several of the consular officials told The Tribune.

Swiss Consul-General Otto Bornhauser said two members of the San Francisco Police Department told him he was a possible target of a plot by the Black Guerrilla Family.

"It is not a pleasant situation for me and my colleagues," Bornhauser said. "I heard these people have some people in prison, but I don't know where."

The other diplomats notified
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were consuls-general Frederick Bergenstrahle of Sweden, Dr. Lothar Schuenke of West Germany and the former consul-general of Japan, Tamio Amau.

Another part of the possible plan or plans called for using explosives to knock out the power plant at Folsom in hopes of disabling electric security devices and dousing lights during a breakout attempt, informed sources said.

The breakout plan was attributed to a group of ex-convicts in a Berkeley "cell" of the BGF, a prison gang founded by George Jackson, a leftist convict and author who himself was killed in an aborted escape at San Quentin in 1971.

The Berkeley BGF group is also thought to be involved in three crimes in Berkeley last spring: the shooting of Stender May 28; the commando-style holdup of a Bank of America branch June 1; and another robbery at a Wells Fargo Bank branch June 14.

The Wells Fargo robbery occurred six days after the marijuana arrest in which the satchel was seized.

After police examined Brooks' satchel, they contacted Berkeley police. According to the testimony of Berkeley police inspector Patrick Phelps, the satchel contained:

- A list of the names, home addresses and home telephone numbers of the consuls-general and of H.M. Kaiser, a director of Kaiser Foundation Hospitals and a former member of the corporate planning staff of Kaiser Industries Corp.

- Color polaroid photographs of what was later identified as the power plant at Folsom Prison east of Sacramento.

- An underground bomb-making manual titled "The Anarchist Cookbook" that lists such chapter headings as "Electronics, Sabotage, and Surveillance" and "Explosives and Booby Traps."

- Two .38-caliber handguns, one of which was used to shoot Stender, ballistics tests showed.

- A stopwatch, surgical gloves and disguises similar to items used by the team of robbers that held up the Bank of America. A \$2- and a \$10-bill traced to the Bank of America holdup were also recovered.

Brooks, who had been released from custody after the San Francisco arrest, was rearrested shortly after the Wells Fargo robbery and charged both with that crime and with the Stender assault.

Four other suspected members of the Berkeley BGF group were also arrested on robbery charges shortly after the Wells Fargo

holdup. Another suspect is still being sought.

The complex chain of events that led to the arrest of Brooks and the others began four days after the shooting of attorney Stender. That is when a group of armed men wearing surgical gloves and disguises escaped after committing a swift, efficient robbery of the Telegraph Avenue branch of the Bank of America. Witnesses told police that one of the men timed the robbery with a stopwatch.

A week later, on June 8, San Francisco narcotics Sgt. Gregory Corrales said he saw three men standing near the corner of Haight and Steiner streets sharing a marijuana cigarette.

According to his testimony in a preliminary hearing last month, Corrales arrested a man later identified as Brooks after a "fierce" struggle in which Brooks pulled a gun from a satchel and declared, "You're not taking me to jail."

Brooks was charged with battery, carrying a concealed weapon and possession of marijuana, while his companions, Roy Gant and Richard Baker, were booked only on the marijuana charges. All three were then freed.

After discovering what was in the satchel, police planned to rearrest Brooks at his arraignment on the pot and battery charges.

But Brooks failed to appear in court. Inspector Phelps testified that police — motivated by fear that "other people were in potential danger" — then began surveillance on two Berkeley residences they had located through an address book also found in the satchel.

Meanwhile, police were examining the other material in the satchel. At first, Phelps testified, police thought the photos were of Pacific Gas and Electric Co. power plants.

But later, when the subject of the photos was recognized as the prison, police began investigating a possible jailbreak plan. At this time, the foreign diplomats were contacted by San Francisco police.

Law enforcement agencies are extremely reluctant to talk about the investigation into the jailbreak plans.

Folsom Prison Warden P.J. Morris told The Tribune that he had been notified of the power plant photo. Morris said the photo was apparently taken from a road that runs across the top of the Folsom Dam.

The final break in the case came six days after the San Francisco incident. On June 14, six armed men held up the Wells Fargo Bank on Adeline Street in Berkeley.

As in the Telegraph Avenue

bank robbery two weeks before, the robbers wore surgical gloves and disguises, executed their crime with speed and precision, and timed the crime with a stopwatch.

Minutes later, according to Phelps' testimony, suspects were intercepted by Berkeley police when they drove three autos to an apartment at 1643 Prince St., Berkeley, where the surveillance team that was looking for Brooks was posted.

In all, five suspected members of the BGF group were charged with the Wells Fargo robbery — Charles Coleman, Keith Lott, Roy Gant, Edward Moten and Brooks. Brooks was also charged with the attempted murder of Stender.

Although police had found some of the money from the Bank of America robbery in Brooks' satchel, no charges have ever been filed in connection with that holdup.

The documents in the satchel apparently did not indicate which Folsom inmates the Berkeley BGF group may have been in contact with. The state Department of Corrections has, however, identified one Folsom inmate as a "general" in the Black Guerrilla Family.

He is Hugo "Yogi" Pinell, a convicted killer and rapist who while in prison became a close friend of BGF founder Jackson. Pinell has been jailed twice in Folsom — from July 1968 to October 1969 and since December 1976.

Prison records show that both Brooks and Coleman have been jailed in Folsom's Security Housing Unit while Pinell was there.

The number of prisoners in this unit is limited. There are about 1,700 prisoners in the prison's general population and the security unit holds 138 single cells, according to a prison spokeswoman.

In letters to Bay Area prison activists last summer, Pinell urged support for the suspects in the Wells Fargo robbery. He also denounced the Stender shooting as "gangsterism."

Stender, a longtime advocate of prison reform, was wounded by a gunman who first forced her to write a note saying she had "betrayed George Jackson and the entire prison movement."

Stender had once served as Jackson's lawyer, and the language of the note led police to suspect a BGF link to the shooting.

Brooks is scheduled to go to trial early next year on the shooting charges. Alameda County Deputy District Attorney Howard Janssen said he expects to be able to inform a jury of the motive.

Alameda Probing Jail Gang

SF Chron 3/24/85
By Bill Wallace

The Alameda County grand jury has opened an investigation of a violent prison gang's activities inside the new \$23 million county jail.

Grand Jury Foreman Emil Sekerak said he will forward allegations of the Black Guerrilla Family's operations to the jury's subcommittee for preliminary investigation. "They will issue a report indicating whether further investigation is called for."

Sekerak said the inquiry was prompted by an article in The Chronicle on Monday describing the gang's alleged involvement in a brutal stabbing death at the ultra-modern North County Jail in Oakland.

The new, high-security jail has

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GANG PROBE

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become a headquarters for the Black Guerrilla Family, a gang spawned in the California prison system. Law enforcement sources say gang members and their associates are deeply involved in Oakland's drug wars.

Gang members reportedly have used weightlifting equipment in the jail as makeshift metal presses to form shards of contraband metal into razor-sharp knives. The weapons have been used in several violent attacks detailed in court documents.

The gang also maintains an intricate communications network linking them with gang members in the state prison system and on the streets, according to intelligence sources.

The gang's activities inside North County Jail came to light after sheriff's deputies began investigating the stabbing death of jail inmate Alfred Ingram last June.

Two alleged Black Guerrilla Family members, Randy Alana and James Darryl Benson, have been charged with murder in Ingram's death. They pleaded not guilty to the charges Monday, and are slated for a preliminary hearing on May 6.

They also are awaiting trial on unrelated murder charges. Alana has been charged with bludgeoning a woman with a claw hammer during an apparent drug theft. Benson is accused of killing one man and trying to kill another in a separate drug rip-off.

Meanwhile, it was learned that two other alleged Black Guerrilla Family members have been charged with murder in another Alameda County Jail stabbing case.

Harold Q. (Ripsaw) Matthews and John P. Pettigrew are accused of murdering Ruben Nevarez, an inmate at Alameda County's Santa Rita Jail, who was stabbed to death in February 1984.

According to court documents, Pettigrew and Matthews assaulted Nevarez after a dispute about a bag of sugar at Santa Rita on Feb. 8, 1984.

Pettigrew and Matthews struck Nevarez with their fists, then Pettigrew pinned Nevarez in a headlock. The documents say Matthews then handed Pettigrew a knife made out of a broken pair of lawn clippers, and Pettigrew fatally stabbed Nevarez four times.

Matthews and Pettigrew, who were transferred to the North County Jail after the stabbing, have been identified as Black Guerrilla Family members in court documents filed in the Alfred Ingram murder case.

Donald Sykes, a North County Jail inmate and prosecution witness in Ingram's murder, said Pettigrew and Matthews were members of a clique of gang members who resided in the "A-pod" housing unit at North County Jail.

According to Sykes' statement, Pettigrew and Matthews discussed killing Ingram with other gang members in North County Jail, and Pettigrew helped Benson and Alana get rid of the evidence after they stabbed Ingram to death on June 23.

"They're a bunch of sick people," Sykes said.

Official: 1 out of 4 public housing units deal drugs

By Jack Cheevers
The Tribune

FRI JUN 20 1986

Although drug dealing has fallen off sharply at Coliseum Gardens, it's still a problem at other public housing projects in Oakland, says the projects' top police officer.

Oakland Housing Authority Police Chief William Smith said there is "known" drug trafficking in about one-fourth of OHA's 11 housing projects and 250 "turnkey" apartment buildings, where more than 10,000 people live.

Smith said his 16-officer department is "definitely" understaffed, and he could use more than three times as many officers to cope with the drug trade in the projects.

"With the staff we have, the small department we have, I think the guys have done a tremendous job of plugging the dike," said Smith. "That's all we can do . . . We don't have the manpower to address everything."

He said the worst single project is Campbell Village in West Oakland, where members of the Black Guerrilla Family, a crime gang spawned in state prisons, has started selling heroin and cocaine.

According to an OHA police operations digest for the month of April, BGF members were "heavily involved" in heroin sales at Campbell Village.

Police last month arrested Richard "Razor" Johnson, who they said is a BGF "street general" who headed the Campbell Village drug ring.

Johnson was charged with possession of more than \$10,000 worth of cocaine. He was paroled from San Quentin state prison in December 1984, according to police.

The police digest said BGF members have asked some tenants if they can use their apart-

ments as drug "safe houses," and that several safe houses have been established.

Smith said he doesn't know why Campbell Village has attracted the heavy drug activity.

"There's no rhyme or reason for it," he said. "That's just where the dealers seem to be gravitating."

Oakland police say their list of the most drug-plagued apartment projects also includes Acorn Village in West Oakland, a privately owned complex where some tenants' rents are federally subsidized.

Acorn and Campbell Village are considered the most serious problems "because of the level of drug activity and the level of potential violence, especially at Acorn," said Sgt. Harry Vaughn, head of the Oakland Police Department's narcotics squad.

"Most search warrants (served) at Acorn yield quite a few weapons, usually semiautomatic, Uzi-type weapons," said Vaughn. "The violence potential there is very strong."

According to the OHA police memo, another hot spot is a turnkey development at 1853

38th Avenue. Turnkeys are housing projects that were privately built but are operated by the housing authority.

The memo said several people associated with convicted heroin kingpin Felix Mitchell's old 69 Mob are involved in cocaine and possibly heroin sales there. It said several shotguns, handguns and automatic weapons were "seen but not recovered" at the complex.

Vaughn said that all the city's housing projects "seem to have a more than average" problem with drugs.

He said drug dealing flourishes in some projects because they are isolated and difficult for police to enter without being noticed.

"People don't go there unless they live there or they want to buy drugs," said Vaughn.

Smith said OHA police have stepped up patrols and surveillance at Campbell Village.

"(Drug dealing has) popped up there before, and we stepped on it," he said. "Now it's popping up again, and we'll step on it again."

BGF started as protectors, revolutionaries

SUN FEB 21 1988

By Paul Grabowicz
and Jack Cheevers
The Tribune

In the late 1960s, a new organization began attracting the attention of politically aware black inmates in California's crowded, volatile prison system: the Black Guerilla Family.

The BGF began as a self-protection group for black inmates, to give them more leverage against both white guards and other prison groups

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such as the Mexican Mafia and white-supremacist Aryan Brotherhood, said Lt. Dave Langerman, spokesman for San Quentin state prison.

One of the Family's first heroes was the charismatic George Jackson, an articulate, self-taught revolutionary who died in a bloody jailbreak attempt at San Quentin in 1971.

The BGF evolved into a vehicle for spreading Maoist theory among black prisoners, hoping they would lead uprisings throughout the prison system, according to Langerman.

Today, a few BGF members still believe in the early ideals. But state prison-gang experts and others say the BGF's focus has changed from revolutionary politics to murder, drug sales and other crimes.

"It was supposed to be the vanguard" of the revolution, Greg Rogers, a BGF member for 12 years, said in a recent jail-cell interview. "... Now everybody's true face is showing. They're gangsters."

Law enforcement sources identify BGF's "supreme commander" as Kenny Carter, 33, a convicted murderer from Los Angeles currently serving a life prison term at the California Correctional Institute at Tehachapi. Under Carter is a five- or six-man commission of BGF members who help him run the gang.

There are about 500 BGF members in California, most of them in prison. They are responsible for the murders of at least nine prison guards, authorities said.

To be admitted to the shadowy gang, prospective members take

a Swahili name and swear an oath of allegiance to the organization. The penalty for violating the oath is death.

The Bay Area and particularly Oakland "has always been a BGF stronghold," said one law enforcement official familiar with the gang. Many of the original BGF members came from the city.

Five full-fledged — or "righteous" — BGF members are now in Oakland, and state prison officials say the gang has at least 30 associates here.

BGF's most recent criminal foray is an extortion racket aimed at Oakland drug dealers. But in the past, its members have been involved in bank robberies, shootings, drug dealing and other crimes.

In 1979, the BGF reportedly planned to kidnap diplomats from the Swiss, Japanese, West German and other consulates in San Francisco. According to the abortive plot, the hostages were to be exchanged for BGF members released from Folsom prison.

The same year, reputed BGF member Edward Glenn Brooks was convicted in the attempted murder of Berkeley lawyer Fay Stender, a well-known prison reform advocate who was once George Jackson's attorney. Stender, who was shot six times, was left paralyzed by the attack and committed suicide a year later.

In 1986, the gang reportedly plotted to assassinate an Alameda County deputy district attorney who handled a number of trials involving BGF members.

The deputy district attorney at the time was prosecuting two BGF members for murder, and a sheriff's sergeant testified the pair had put out a \$100,000 "contract" on the prosecutor's life.

Prison muscles SUN FEB 21 1988 drug de

**By Jack Cheevers
and Paul Grabowicz**
The Tribune

One chill night last month, two men gripping Uzi assault rifles stopped a slow-moving Buick in East Oakland. The gunmen ordered the three occupants of the car to get out and lie down.

Declaring they were members of the Black Guerrilla Family, one of California's most feared prison gangs, the gunmen then started pistol-whipping one of the three, an ex-drug dealer.

"They said, 'Don't look up, just give us all your money,'" one of the shaken victims told police afterward. "They said, 'We're the BGF, and this is a robbery.'"

Police say the Jan. 28 ripoff is the latest incident in an often-violent ongoing BGF extortion racket against major Oakland drug dealers that has netted the shadowy prison gang hundreds

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of thousands of dollars in the last few years.

Predict bloodshed

And law-enforcement and BGF sources predict the recent release from prison of five BGF members — including the gang's "minister of education" — will lead to bloodshed this summer as the shakedowns escalate.

The five, all paroled to Oakland, belong to two competing BGF factions. Authorities worry they may be on a collision course in a struggle to control the extortion racket, which was disrupted recently after three ringleaders were jailed.

"All of them are going to try to extort the same drug dealers and they're going to build armies around themselves," said Greg Rogers, a self-described BGF "lieutenant," during a jailhouse interview with The Tribune earlier this month.

"I know there's going to be gunfire, because of the caliber of the people getting out . . . By summer, quite a few people will be killed," added Rogers, 32, who said he was one of the three BGF members who previously ran the extortion scheme.

For drug dealers who resist BGF demands, the consequences can be harsh. In one case, the front of an East Oakland club owned by a reputed dealer was machine-gunned by BGF enforcers, police said.

No charges filed

Last summer, a dealer was shot in the buttocks at a MacArthur Boulevard motel by a BGF "soldier," according to police. The dealer later insisted he shot himself by "accident," and charges never were filed against the gunman.

In another incident, Rogers said, "We made arrangements for a dealer's Jaguar to be blown up. After the Jaguar blew up, (our) phone started ringing."

Police say the BGF has been involved sporadically in narcotics trafficking and shaking down dope sellers since the late 1970s. But the extortion racket has escalated sharply in recent years, because it proved less risky and more lucrative.

In the past two years alone, the gang has wrung about \$250,000 from Oakland dealers, authorities say. Rogers put the fig-

ure even higher — between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

Both sides agree many dealers are only too willing to pay BGF "street taxes" because of the consequences of holding out.

"They (dealers) figure they're going to end up in prison someday," said Rogers, who recently was paroled out of the Bay Area after agreeing to testify against another BGF member on trial for attempted murder.

'Hit' in prison

"We don't have to do something (violent) on the street — we can wait until they get in the (prison) system," he said. "Then we can tell someone in the system to hit someone."

"We have a history of making sure we get our target," Rogers added with a smile.

The BGF, which originated as a self-protection group for black prison inmates and later espoused revolution within the state prison system, boasts about 500 active members in and out of jail, according to law enforcement officials.

The gang has been involved in bank robbery, drug dealing and other crimes, but police sources say its main source of income now comes from the dealer shakedowns.

About one third of that money, Rogers said, is picked up by a courier and stashed for BGF "supreme commander" Kenny Carter, who is serving a life sentence at Tehachapi state prison.

The balance is used to pay living expenses for BGF members on the street and to buy drugs, television sets and other gifts for members in jail, Christmas presents for their families and other items, Rogers said.

Takeover attempt

Rogers and police said the extortion racket is rooted in a 1986 attempt by the BGF to set up its own drug-selling network in Oakland, by taking over turf that opened up after drug lords like Felix Mitchell and Harvey Whisenton were imprisoned.

That year, the BGF operated a \$5,000-a-week drug ring inside the Campbell Village housing project in West Oakland, according to Oakland Housing Authority police.

But the gang quickly discovered its expertise — and better profits — lay in ripping off drug

dealers rather than selling narcotics on its own.

"They're good musclemen, but they're not very sharp when it comes to conducting business," said a prison-gang expert with the state Department of Corrections.

To contact the dealers, the BGF initially used women friends of gang members. The women approached dealers on the street or at home, informing them of BGF demands, Rogers said.

"We'd just kick back and wait and one of our beepers would go off" when a dealer was ready to pay, he said.

In May 1986, Rogers was arrested on a parole violation and another ringleader of the extortion gang, BGF "street general" Richard "Razor" Johnson, was jailed on a drug charge. Several months later, the third BGF ringleader was arrested for attempted murder.

Mailed from prison

The three then turned to mailing letters from prison demanding payment from the dealers, police said.

The letters are a mix of overt threats and quasi-political rhetoric that attempt to portray the BGF as the protector of the black community from narcotics-peddling "maggots."

In one such letter obtained by The Tribune, the gang proclaims its campaign to "shut down or destroy the drug dealers for their crimes against the people."

The document demands that dealers "contribute a percentage of the funds and weapons you have taken from the black communities."

Police say the BGF has sent at least a dozen such letters and overall has extorted money from at least 20 dealers.

Ten days ago, a federal judge sentenced Johnson, 36, to two years in prison for sending threatening letters to at least two people while he was an inmate at the North County jail in Oakland.

Federal prosecutors charged in court papers that Johnson sent "numerous" letters from his cell at Tehachapi state prison "which contained expressed intentions to commit extortion and to . . . resume a pattern of drug distribution" when he was released from jail.

Upbraids dealer

In one letter contained in court records, Johnson upbraids a competing cocaine dealer at Campbell Village for failing to pay an agreed-upon \$100,000 tribute.

As a pretext for the tribute, police said, Johnson accused the dealer's soldiers of informing on him to authorities.

Johnson told the dealer he personally intervened to stop his own subordinates from "sleeping," or murdering, the dealer.

He also angrily claimed the dealer failed to make a down-payment on the \$100,000 in the form of eight "zippers," a BGF term for Uzi semi-automatic rifles. The Israeli-built Uzi is the weapon of choice of many drug sellers.

"There is no desire to see you sleep, yet by the dictates . . . we govern our entire being by, it ceases being optional if the matter isn't settled to all satisfaction," Johnson wrote.

The extortion racket is expected to escalate in coming months, because five BGF members have recently been paroled from state prisons to Oakland.

And authorities fear rivalries between the BGF members may touch off more violence this summer.

One faction is headed by a BGF "minister of justice," police said, who was recently paroled after serving time for bank robbery.

Among the soldiers in his faction, police said, is a BGF "joka," a Swahili word meaning "dragon." A gang member so designated has the authority to order a killing, according to police sources.

Police said the leader of the other faction is the BGF's "minister of education," who was paroled last month from San Quentin, where he'd been serving an eight-year sentence for bank robbery, weapons possession and other crimes.

"These guys are going to come in, offer protection, extort money and then they'll try to take over each other's areas," said the state prison-gang expert.

"That's when you'll get a whole bunch of violence."

Huey Newton's accused killer, a toddler when the Black Panther Party was born, is tired of hearing about Huey the hero.

When Newton is eulogized by ex-Panthers this week on the anniversary of his death last Aug. 22, Tyrone Robinson will sit in a cell at the Oakland jail, awaiting a murder trial that likely won't happen until sometime next year.

Robinson, 26, who reputedly killed the Panther founder to advance himself in a black prison gang, is not at all interested in talking about Huey.

Asked to comment on the attention the late black radical would be receiving this week, Robinson walked out of a jail interview room and told a reporter to "talk to my lawyer."

The stocky suspect, dressed in white jail denims, has been held at the North County Jail since his arrest three days

after Newton was fatally shot on a West Oakland street corner.

And while Robinson is mum about the case, his lawyer, Al Wagner of Oakland, had this to say about Huey Newton:

"I spent a lot of time growing up in the '60s, and I understand what Huey meant when he told the white power establishment to stick it. But the guy was incredibly violent."

Robinson's defense is that Newton pulled a gun on him during the early-morning street encounter and that he shot Newton, 47, in self defense.

To bolster the defense, Wagner hopes to call witnesses at trial who will claim that Newton, in the hours before his death, was armed, high on cocaine and threatening to "blow someone away."

Other sources claim that, in the months before his death, Newton frequently held up West Oakland drug dealers, including members of the Black Guerrilla Family, and robbed them of money

and dope.

The BGF, an extremely violent prison gang, is active in Oakland's narcotics trade. Its members primarily act as enforcers for drug lords and collect "street taxes" from smaller dealers, according to law enforcement and other sources.

It was Newton's alleged harassment of BGF members, police and prosecutors allege, that led Robinson, known on the streets as "Double R" and a reputed associate of the prison gang, to shoot Newton in retaliation.

According to court documents and the pretrial testimony of one of Robinson's friends, an unarmed Newton met Robinson and his friend on the street corner and demanded crack cocaine from Robinson.

Robinson, still angry that Newton had robbed him of \$160 and 14 rocks of cocaine two months earlier, saw his chance for a promotion in the gang, according to documents. He allegedly fired one shot in Newton's face, and two more in his head.

As Robinson left the scene, he reportedly told his friend: "I made rank."

The friend, Brian Walton, testified at the pretrial hearing that Newton's last words were: "You can kill my body but you can never kill my soul. My soul will live on."

According to police, Robinson has not been involved in any jail scuffles since his arrest. He sees visitors occasionally and his lawyer described him as being "in good health."

Wagner calls Robinson, a high school dropout and convicted thief, "a child of the streets of Oakland, just like Huey was. They both rose from the same streets."

But Assistant Alameda County District Attorney Ken Burr, who will prosecute the case, said Robinson never would have risen to the stature of Newton.

"I get the impression that Huey was a little smarter," said Burr — "but maybe not on the occasion of his death."

Killing Newton meant 'opportunity,' DA says

WED OCT - 2 1991

By Will Jones
Tribune staff writer

Tyrone Robinson, an ex-convict and small-time drug dealer, killed Black Panther Party co-founder Huey P. Newton on an Oakland street to become a boss in a prison gang, a prosecutor told a jury yesterday.

"He (Robinson) wanted to be a shot-caller in the mean streets of Oakland and Huey Newton provided that opportunity," Senior Deputy District Attorney Kenneth Burr said in closing arguments in Alameda County Superior Court.

The prosecutor said Robinson — whose court attire included a mustard-colored suit and wire-rimmed glasses — may have looked like a "yuppie" during his trial, but that the defendant "is a violent man . . . a murderer."

Burr said Robinson, 27, shot Newton three times in the head at 9th and Center streets in West Oakland on Aug. 22, 1989, to advance in rank in the Black Guerilla Family prison gang.

Of the three people present at the shooting, only Robinson survived. Brian Keith Walton was killed in an unrelated incident four months after Newton's death.

"But all three came into this courtroom in one way or another to say that Tyrone Robinson is a murderer," Burr intoned.

Walton's statement to police and his Oakland Municipal Court testimony implicating Robinson in Newton's death — both of which came prior to Walton's killing — were read or played to the jury that soon will deliberate Robinson's fate.

Burr displayed photographs of Newton after he was shot, saying the pictures "tell you he was not shot in self-defense," but murdered.

Robinson's own testimony indicated murder because he shot Newton in the head, with two of the bullets fired from a distance of less than six inches, Burr said.

The prosecutor urged jurors to convict Robinson of murder, using a weapon to commit the crime and being an ex-felon in possession of a gun.

During the trial, Robinson admitted killing Newton, 47, but claimed he shot in self-defense after Newton fired at him when the two met on the street around 5:30 a.m.

Robinson's attorney, Alfons Wagner, hammered away at the credibility of Walton and Derwin "Shorty Red" Marshall, an acquaintance of Robinson who testified at the month-long trial.

Wagner said the statements and testimony of Walton and Marshall were no more credible than Robinson's.

They all came from the same

mold — dealing and using drugs on the streets, Wagner said.

Wagner told the jury: "You may say, 'I don't know what happened down there (at the shooting scene).' If you reach that conclusion, then you can't convict Tyrone Robinson."

He said Walton, who told police he witnessed the shooting of Newton, had a criminal record, that his gun was used to kill Newton and that he was given immunity from prosecution.

Walton said in his statements to police and testimony in Municipal Court that Robinson's own gun jammed after he first

struck Newton on the head.

He said Robinson then grabbed his gun, a 9mm semi-automatic weapon, and shot Newton once while he was standing and twice after he fell to the ground.

Both Walton and Marshall said Robinson later boasted that he killed Newton to become a leader in the prison gang so he could give orders to other gang members.

Burr said that during the trial, Newton himself was characterized as either as a "fallen hero who paid the price of his fame, or a gun-toting crack cocaine fiend."

Gang boss faces Three Strikes over drug arrest

THU JUL 21 1995

By Harry Harris
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — The reputed Bay Area leader of the Black Guerrilla Family prison gang was charged Thursday with possessing more than \$5,000 worth of heroin police say he was about to deliver to the gang's street dealers.

Authorities said they will prosecute Richard "Razor" Johnson, 44, of Oakland — who has a 21-year criminal record — under provisions of the "Three Strikes, You're Out" law.

Johnson, who was arrested following a high-speed car chase, was charged Thursday with possession of heroin for sale and transporting narcotics.

He could face life in prison if convicted and is being held in lieu of \$1 million bail.

Police said another man arrested with Johnson, reputed Black Guerrilla lieutenant Michael Denham, 43, of Oakland, had the same charges filed against him. Police said Denham was paroled from prison last month after serving a term for assault and weapons convictions, but will not be prosecuted under the Three Strikes law.

The two men were arrested Tuesday by Officer Mike Yoell, a veteran street officer who has made hundreds of narcotics arrests in his career.

Yoell saw the two men speed by him while he was on patrol near Lake Merritt and began pursuing their car. He said he knew Johnson, who was driving the 1989 Pontiac

Grand Am, and Denham as narcotics traffickers involved in gang activity.

The chase, which reached speeds of 90 mph, went from Interstate 580 to Interstate 980. Yoell said he could see the men trying unsuccessfully to throw a bag from the car and thought it contained either drugs or a gun.

The men stopped near the 18th Street off-ramp of I-980 where Yoell, Sgt. Jerry Harris and other officers who had joined in the chase ordered them out of the Pontiac at gunpoint.

On the floorboard of the car, police found a bag with 525 balloons, each filled with \$10 or \$20 worth of powdered heroin, narcotics Officer John Gutierrez said. Johnson also had \$1,200 in cash, police said.

Gutierrez said Johnson controls most of the heroin trafficking in West Oakland, primarily at the Campbell Village and other housing projects.

He said street sources have told police that besides having their own cadre of dealers, the gang under Johnson is extorting other dealers to either buy drugs from them or pay for protection.

One law enforcement source said, "Razor is the real deal when you talk about the BGF. He's not a pretender."

Gutierrez said he believes the men were speeding when Yoell saw them because they were late in making their daily afternoon drop-offs to dealers.